

A Shared Culture of Heavenly Fragrance

A Comparison of Late Byzantine and Ottoman Incense Burners and Censing Practices in Religious Contexts

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The use of fragrances and sweet smells for the purposes of purifying and sanctifying religious space has been practiced for millennia by many different Mediterranean and Middle Eastern civilizations, from the ancient Hebrews to contemporary Christians and Muslims. The Byzantine and Ottoman civilizations were no exception. Late Byzantine churches were redolent with incense smoke distributed by swinging censers during the eucharistic liturgy, as well as from stationary censers that burned in front of icons. The *typikon* of the Pantokrator Monastery, in Istanbul, was written in 1136 in order to establish practices to be followed for centuries thereafter, and requires that:

Incense will be provided from the monastery . . . each week weighing half a *litra*. . . . When the psalm “Blameless” has thus been completed and the monks are now about to process into the church, the priest who has the duty for the day will go in with them and receive the censer from the ecclesiarch. Then he will stand in front of the sanctuary and with the usual prayer bow and when he has performed a censing in the form of a cross in front of the sanctuary screen he will go next into the sanctuary and will perform a censing three times in the form of a cross in front of the holy table, then he will do likewise also at each of the other sides of the holy table. When he comes out of the sanctuary one of the readers will receive him and with his head uncovered

will precede him with a light. The priest will follow and first of all will go to the chapel of the Incorporeal where our tombs are situated; then standing before the icon of the Pantokrator itself, he will cense it in the form of a cross, after that all the holy places in the church and the most venerable icons in them, and along with them all the monks who are standing there.¹

Like late Byzantines, Ottomans equally perfumed their spaces of worship on holy days, as well as their tombs year-round, but they did so through the hands of a person hired specifically for that purpose, a *buhurcu*. Endowment documents testify to this practice, as in the following excerpt from the title deed (*vakfiye*) of the Süleymaniye Mosque complex, built for Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520–1566) by Mimar Sinan between 1548 and 1559, and located within walking distance of the Pantokrator Monastery: “And one person who is knowledgeable in the affairs of *buhur* [incense] and perfuming, [who is] known for his pleasant demeanor and cleanliness, [and] whose trustworthiness and piety are obvious shall be *buhuri*, and he shall perform his duty without dribbling drop by drop [that is, being stingy] or being wasteful. For the expenses he shall be given daily 4 *akçe* and for his salary daily 6 *akçe*.”²

1 Trans. R. Jordan, *BMFD* 2:739.

2 Trans. N. Ergin. “Ve bir nezahet ü nazafet ile meşhur, emanet ve diyaneti gayr-i mestur, ahval-i buhur ü tebhire ve habir kimesne

Such olfactory practices in various cultural contexts began to elicit great interest from scholars with the arrival of sensory anthropology; the Byzantine context has been investigated especially by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Beatrice Caseau, and Bissera Pentcheva.³ Yet, there is much room for new contributions, for a number of reasons. First, the abovementioned studies have focused on the early to middle Byzantine empire, leaving later practices still largely unknown. Second, incense burners as art objects have received scanty consideration, in a rather isolated manner if at all, that privileges unique

Buhuri olup bi-la tebzirin ve taktirin eda-i hizmet eyleye. Harc için yevmi dört akça ve vazifesi için yevmi altı akça verile.” K. Kürkçüoğlu, *Süleymaniye Vakfiyesi* (Ankara, 1962), 36. Transliterations of Ottoman Turkish conform to a system that approximates modern Turkish spelling and ignores the diacritical marks that indicate long vowels and consonants that do not exist in English, simply because it is easier to read.

3 On the so-called “sensorial turn” of the 1990s, see D. Howes, “Charting the Sensorial Revolution,” *Senses and Society* 1 (2006): 113–28; idem, “Architecture of the Senses,” in *Sense of the City: An Alternate Approach to Urbanism*, ed. M. Zardini (Montreal, 2005), 322. For foundational texts of the field, see D. Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor, 2003); idem, ed., *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Toronto, 1991); C. Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures* (London, 1993); and D. Howes, ed., *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford, 2005). For studies of olfactory history, see A. Corbin, *Le miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social, XVIII^e–XIX^e siècles* (Paris, 1982); trans. by M. L. Kochan as *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 1986); C. Classen, D. Howes, and A. Synnott, *Aroma: A Cultural History of Smell* (London, 1994); D. Jung, ed., *Special Issue on Perfumery and Ritual in Asia*, *JRAS* 23, no. 1 (2013). For a recent survey, see M. Jenner, “Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling and Their Histories,” *AHR* 116 (2011): 335–51. S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, 2006); B. Caseau, “Euodia: The Use and Meaning of Fragrances in the Ancient World and Their Christianization (100–900 AD)” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994); idem, “Incense and Fragrances: From House to Church: A Study of the Introduction of Incense into Early Byzantine Christian Churches,” in *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400–1453)*, ed. M. Grünbart et al. (Vienna, 2007), 75–92; B. Caseau, “Objects in Churches: The Testimony of Inventories,” in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Lavan, E. Swift, and T. Putzeys (Leiden, 2007), 568–73; B. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2011). For a historiographical survey of studies concerning the Western European context, see E. Palazzo, “Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge: état de la question et perspective de recherche,” *CabCM* 55 (2012): 339–66. See also idem, “Art, Liturgy and the Five Senses in the Early Middle Ages,” *Viator* 41 (2010): 25–56.

examples and formal analysis without much contextualization.⁴ Finally, little attention has been paid to the cross-cultural dimensions between Byzantine and Islamic practices.⁵ This essay therefore examines from a comparative perspective late Byzantine and Ottoman incense burners and censuring in churches, mosques, and mausolea of the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries as a case study for a thriving shared culture of heavenly fragrance.⁶ In more concrete terms, then, the questions underlying this study are as follows: What differences/similarities/(dis)continuities characterized late Byzantine and Ottoman religious censuring practices and

4 Discussions of incense burners are typically found in exhibition catalogs, either general surveys of Byzantine art or catalogs featuring specific museum or monastic collections. For instance, incense burners are included in the recent exhibition catalog *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, ed. A. Drandaki and D. Papanikola-Bakirtze (Athens, 2013). Treasury catalogs, such as M. Šakota's *Dečanska riznika* (Belgrade, 1984), likewise feature examples. Incense burners are also included in studies of regional metalwork. See, for example, D. Milovanović and B. Radojković, *Masterpieces of Serbian Goldsmiths' Work, 13th–18th Century: An Exhibition* (London, 1981), and C. Nicolescu, *Arta metalelor prețioase în România* (Bucharest, 1973). The censers that have received the most attention are typically exceptional, like the Benaki Museum Virgin Hodegetria katzion, in A. Drandaki, “Handle of a Standing Censer (Katzion),” in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Milan, 2000), 362–63. The San Marco censer, a church-shaped silver gilt censer that was later repurposed into a reliquary, is far and away the best-known Byzantine incense burner. For recent bibliography, see M. Da Villa Urbani, “Perfume Brazier in the Form of a Domed Building,” in *Byzantium, 330–1453*, ed. R. Cormack and M. Vassilaki (London, 2008), 178. Censers from Western Europe have been surveyed in H. Westermann-Angerhausen, *Mittelalterliche Weihrauchfässer von 800 bis 1500* (Petersberg, 2013). For a list of publications on Islamic incense burners along these lines, see N. Ergin, “The Fragrance of the Divine: Ottoman Incense Burners in Context,” *ArtB* 96, no. 1 (2014), n. 2.

5 An exception is L. Nees, “L'odorat fait-il sens? Quelques réflexions autour l'encens de l'Antiquité tardive au haut Moyen Âge,” *CabCM* 55 (2012): 451–71. For a recent notable contribution to the question of changes and continuities between pre-Islamic and Islamic olfactory practices, see A. Zohar and E. Lev, “Trends in the Use of Perfumes and Incense in the Near East after the Muslim Conquest,” in Jung, *Perfumery and Ritual* (n. 3 above), 11–30. Zohar and Lev are able to conclude which fragrances were newly introduced, and which ones gained, kept, or lost popularity after the arrival of Islam.

6 From the term *shared culture of objects*, coined by Oleg Grabar in his study of the *Book of Treasures and Gifts*, an eleventh-century text recording the diplomatic gifts of luxury goods that circulated in the medieval Mediterranean. See O. Grabar, “The Shared Culture of Objects,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), 115–29.



FIG. 1 Akathistos Hymn, strophes 23 and 24, Church of St. Demetrius, Markov Monastery (near Skopje, FYROM), ca. 1375 (photo reproduced in A. Serafimova, *Christian Monuments* [Skopje, 2009])

censers? And what may be the reasons behind these characteristics?

The sources that we have relied on to address these questions can be divided roughly into texts, images, and objects. For late Byzantium, the Bible remains one of the most important sources, as during this period both the Old and New Testaments continued to provide worshippers and clergy with justification for burning incense, examples of specific resins, interpretation of the practice, and models of situations in which incense should be used.⁷ Other textual sources are also quite rich. Perhaps most significant are those related to the liturgy, which include the texts of the service itself, rubrics that detail its correct performance, and commentaries that explain its meaning. For instance, Symeon of Thessalonike (1381–1429), one of the late Byzantine world's preeminent

liturgical commentators, follows the millennia-old tradition of equating good smell with the presence of God, noting in his *Explanation of the Divine Temple* that incense is “the sweet odor of the [Holy] Spirit.”⁸ Symeon likewise references its sacrificial function, noting that the priest “offers incense to God in thanksgiving for what has been accomplished.”⁹ Typika also provide us with donation lists of censers and incense to monasteries and records of their use. The Pantokrator Monastery typikon, cited above, details not only the use of incense during the Liturgy of the Hours and the Divine Liturgy, but also includes myrrh and frankincense in a list of medical supplies to be purchased by the superintendent.¹⁰ Such texts allow us to follow into the late Byzantine period an unbroken understanding of incense as a symbol of divine presence and sacrifice, and as a substance with medicinal and purificatory properties. For the use of censers, we turn not only to texts, but also to images. Censers are depicted frequently in painting and mosaic, most commonly in images of processions (fig. 1), of dormitions

7 For the Hebrew Bible, see the summary in Caseau, “Euodia,” 82–90. In the New Testament, see passages such as Matthew 2:11 (the gift of frankincense and myrrh to the infant Christ), Luke 1:9 (Zacharias offers incense in the temple), John 12:3–8 (Mary of Bethany anoints Christ's feet with perfume), Mark 14:3–9 (an unnamed woman anoints Christ's head with spikenard in Bethany), Mark 16:1 and others (Mary Magdalene and other women bring spices to Christ's tomb to anoint him), Ephesians 5:2 (Christ is a fragrant sacrifice on our behalf to God), 2 Corinthians 2:14 (Christians diffuse fragrance of the knowledge of God), Revelation 5:8 (the Elders of the Apocalypse worship the Lamb with vials of odors), Revelation 8:3–4 (an angel offers incense before the throne of God), etc.

8 St. Symeon of Thessalonike, *The Liturgical Commentaries*, trans. S. Hawkes-Teeple (Toronto, 2011), 97.

9 Ibid., 233.

10 *BMFD* 2:761. In listing the necessary medical supplies, the typikon uses the terms for the magi's gifts in Matthew 2:11, *σμύρναν* (myrrh) and *λίβανον* (frankincense), although Jordan translates *λίβανον* more generally as “incense.”

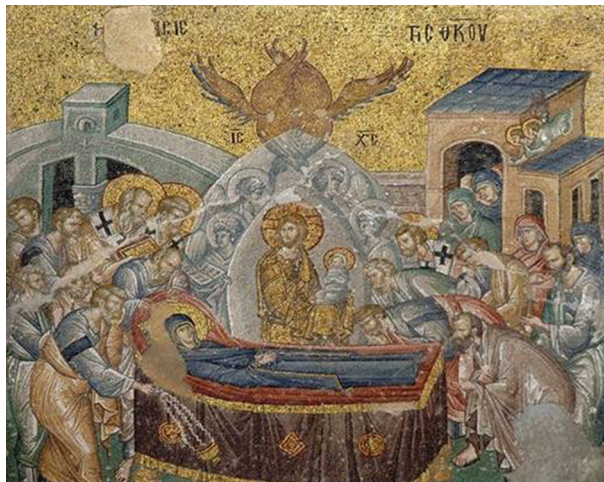


FIG. 2 Dormition of the Virgin, Chora Monastery (Istanbul, Turkey), ca. 1321 (photo courtesy of Tera Lee Hedrick)

of the Virgin and other holy figures (fig. 2), and of the myrrh-bearing women that visited Christ's empty tomb (fig. 3).

Sources for the Ottoman context include hadith, the deeds and sayings of the Prophet, which provide abundant information on scenting practices, as well as early Islamic connotations of various fragrances, unlike the Qur'an with its very few fragrance-related references.¹¹ In short, already before the death of the Prophet, scents served as a distinguishing mark of good and evil, in the conceptualization of paradise, as a component of Muslims' body hygiene and dress, and in the context of communal worship. For Ottoman Sunni Muslims that adhere to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, the *Sahih Muslim* and the *Sahih al-Bukhari* constitute the two hadith collections after which they model their attitudes and behavior, and both collections contain numerous passages that forge a connection between olfactory experience and morality in ways that evoke centuries-old pan-Mediterranean traditions.¹² Endowment deeds,

11 Suras 55:12 (sweet-smelling plants among the bounties of God's creation), and 83:26 (wine flasks sealed with musk as heavenly reward for those nearest to God).

12 Named after the Persian jurist Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man ibn Thabit (699–767), this school is the oldest and most widespread, and particularly emphasizes analogical reasoning. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri, *Sahih Muslim, Being Traditions of the Sayings of the*



FIG. 3 Virgin with the women at the tomb, Church of Christ Pantokrator, Gračanica Monastery (near Pristina, Kosovo), 1319–21 (photo courtesy of Nektarios Zarras)

vakfiye, also provide more practical information on incense use in Ottoman everyday life, as they were conceptually informed by the hadith. Some of them specify the quantity and manner of distribution of incense, planned expenditures, the employment of a buhurcu, and similar details.¹³ Although to our knowledge there is no preserved recipe for the fumigatories as they were employed in mosques and tombs, the *Helvahane Defteri* presents a glimpse of fragrance production at the Topkapı Palace. This recipe book, dated AH 1017 (1608/9), was authored by Muhammad Ağa and was used at least until AH 1181 (1767/68).¹⁴ The different types of raw materials and their various levels of quality and price on the open market can be gathered from an official price register (*narh defteri*) that dates to 1640, which set ceiling prices for services

Prophet Muhammad as Narrated by His Companions and Compiled under the Title al-Jami' us-Sahih, 4 vols., trans. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi (Lahore, 1971–75); Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Lahore, 1983). For their searchable online texts, see USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts, <http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/> (accessed 7 May 2015). For a discussion and full list of references to scent in the hadith, see Ergin, "Fragrance of the Divine," 72–73.

13 Ergin, "Fragrance of the Divine," table 1, 92–93.

14 Published in A. Terzioğlu, *Helvahane Defteri ve Topkapı Sarayında Eczacılık* (Istanbul, 1992).

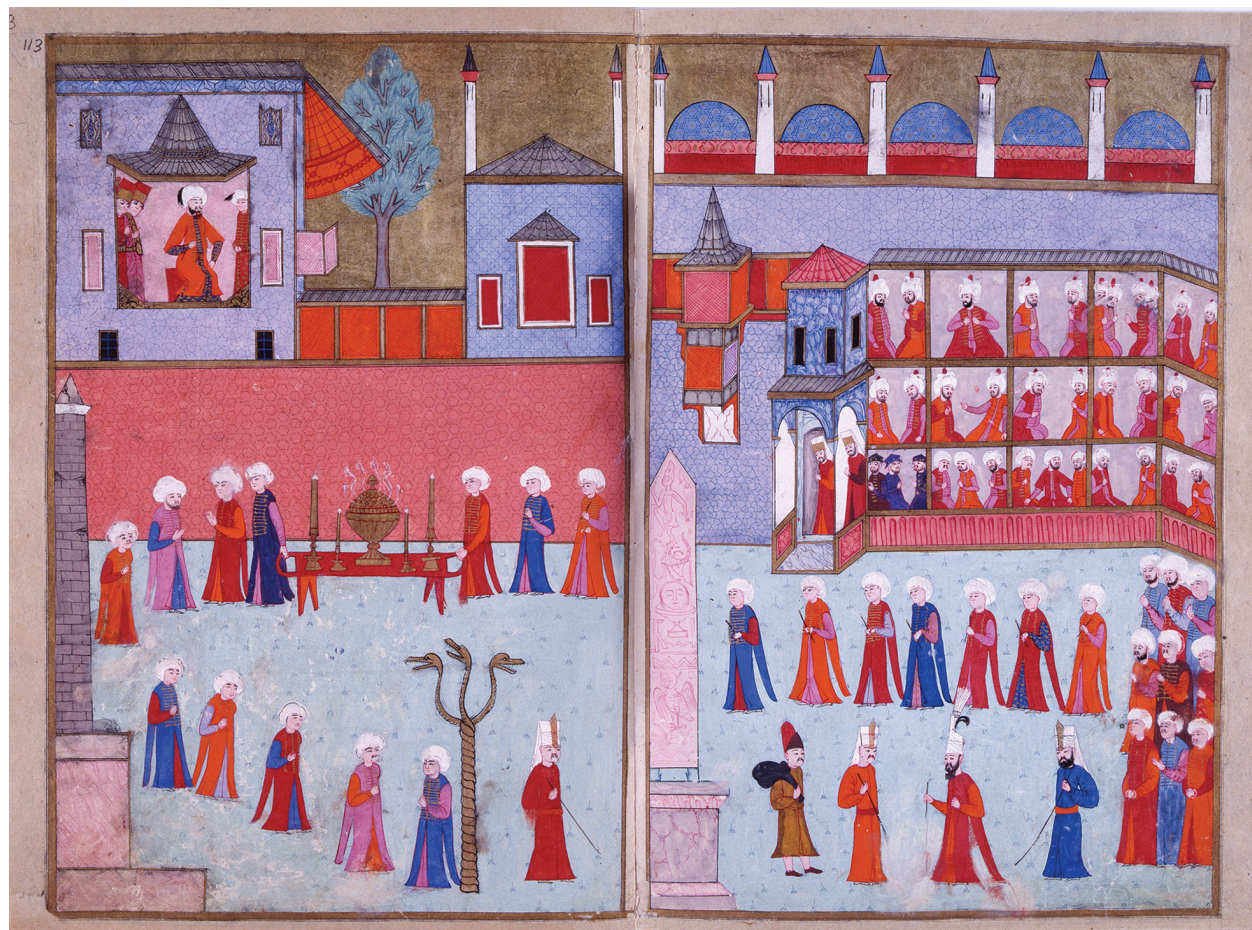


FIG. 4 Procession of the guild of *buburcus*, by Nakkaş Osman, in *Surname-i Hümayun*, Topkapı Palace Museum (Istanbul), H. 1344, fols. 112b–13a, ca. 1582 (photo © Topkapı Palace Museum)

and goods in the imperial capital.¹⁵ Miniature paintings in the *Surname-i Hümayun* depict the processions of guilds (including that of the perfumers and metalworkers making censers, as in fig. 4) on the occasions of the princes' circumcision celebrations and also show the production and use of incense burners.¹⁶

The Incense Burners

The material of Byzantine censers is generally copper alloy, with more expensive silver examples in

existence. They are divided into two major types: hanging censers that could swing and standing censers (*katzia*) that could be placed on a flat surface or carried around by a handle. Hanging censers typically consist of a cubical, polygonal, or cylindrical cup attached to chains, sometimes with an openwork cover and sometimes without a cover.¹⁷ A modest and previously unpublished fourteenth-century example from the Varna Archaeological Museum displays this basic form with an undecorated bronze bowl and a

15 M. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul, 1983).

16 İntizami (text) and Nakkaş Osman (paintings), *Surname-i Hümayun*, ca. 1582, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul, H. 1344.

17 An early Byzantine example from the Cyprus Treasure, now in the collection of the British Museum, features a silver hexagonal cup, with the face of each of its six sides decorated with the bust of a saint. M. M. Mango, "Censer," in Cormack and Vassilaki, *Byzantium*, 386–87.



FIG. 5 Hanging censer from Northeastern Bulgaria, thirteenth to fourteenth century, bronze, 11.2 cm × 6 cm. Varna Archaeological Museum, Varna, Bulgaria (artwork in the public domain; photo courtesy of Tera Lee Hedrick)



FIG. 6 Katzion from Janjevo, Serbia, fourteenth century, bronze, 11 cm × 12.5 cm × 3.05 cm. Museum of Applied Arts, Belgrade, Serbia, no. 161 (photo © Museum of Applied Arts)

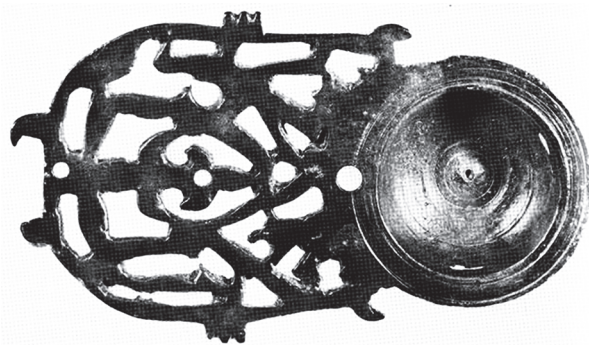


FIG. 7 Katzion from Mystra, Greece, fourteenth or fifteenth century, bronze, 19.5 cm × 11.8 cm × 15 cm. Private collection (photo from Bouras, "Epta thumiateria")

rim attached to three chains and a hook (fig. 5). The hook would have rendered the chains unusable: presumably at some point the object was converted from a swinging censer into a suspended object, possibly in order to be hung from an iron tie-rod within an arch. Katzia are known from the eleventh century onward and feature a long handle with a cup attached to one end, such as in a fourteenth-century example from Belgrade (fig. 6).¹⁸

Hanging censers continued to be used in the last centuries of Byzantium and, as we shall explore below, feature prominently in pictorial sources; however, they seem to have ceded some of their popularity to the katzia type. While the survival of all late Byzantine metalwork is notoriously low, and censers are no exception, katzia outnumber hanging censers among extant examples.¹⁹ This may simply be an accident of survival, rather than a reflection on their actual numbers. Katzia are particularly associated with monastic contexts, and thus survive in treasury collections. They were also used in funerary rites, evidenced by the discovery of a katzion in a 1951 Mystra tomb excavation (fig. 7). It is also possible that by the late period the efficiency of the hanging censer was no longer a priority. Swinging causes the largest possible amount of oxygen to feed the hot coals and produce great clouds of smoke, which quickly fills even a large nave. The typically small churches of the late Byzantine period may have required less scent to fill the space.²⁰ Certainly, carrying a small katzion requires less work

18 L. Bouras, "Επτά θυμιατήρια: Παλαιοχριστιανικά και βυζαντινά θυμιατήρια του Μουσείου Μπενάκη," *Archaiologia* 1 (1981): 65; D. Milanović, "Catalogue," in Milovanović and Radojković, *Masterpieces* (n. 4 above), 32n43.

19 For an overview of liturgical metalwork from this period, see A. Ballian, "Liturgical Implements," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans (New Haven, 2004), 116–24.

20 T. F. Mathews, "'Private' Liturgy in Byzantine Architecture: Toward a Reappraisal," *CabArch* 30 (1982): 129–30. Mathews notes the "new intimacy in the dimensions of the church building itself" following Iconoclasm. He cites the medieval churches of Kastoria in northern Greece as an example, noting that in all of the extant thirty churches the distance from the front entrance to the apse is never more than ten meters. Even at the Chora Monastery, the jewel of late Byzantine churches in Constantinople, the distance from the door of the inner narthex to the apse is less than thirty meters. It may be possible that larger, swinging censers could generate *too* much scent. The Benaki military saints katzion features an ember bowl only 2.5 cm in diameter, while the Sion censer is 17 cm in diameter.

than aggressively swinging a hanging censer. Perhaps, too, the form evolved to fulfill other functions. The broad handle of a katzion may have provided a better ground for a single image than the cylindrical form of the hanging censer, which would have been easily seen only when the object was stationary. While an exceptional example, the Benaki Museum's Virgin Hodegetria censer (early fourteenth century) features a handle that is an astounding twenty-nine by twenty-one centimeters (fig. 8). Scholars have suggested from its size that it functioned as an icon when not in use.²¹

While censers from the early Byzantine period occasionally feature scenes from the life of Christ or the Virgin, or scenes that specifically refer to scent, such as the Adoration of the Magi (fig. 9), no surviving late Byzantine censers picture narrative scenes.²²

21 Drandaki, "Handle," 362. The iconography of Mother and Child also seems particularly appropriate for a censer. For centuries, in myriad hymns and liturgical texts, writers such as John of Damascus compared Christ to incense and Mary to the thurible. Christ was understood to be the burning coal of the Prophet Isaiah's vision, from Isaiah 6:1–7, in which Isaiah records that "one of the seraphim flew unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The Theotokos was the thurible, "which pregnant with the divine coal . . . made fragrant the whole creation." For a survey of this symbolism and its influence on images of the Dormition of the Virgin in the middle Byzantine period, see M. Evangelatou, "The Symbolism of the Censer in Byzantine Representations of the Dormition of the Virgin," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Aldershot, 2005), 117–31. The metaphor of Christ as coal continues into the late Byzantine period. For instance, Symeon of Thessalonike, claiming that the clergy's status is equal to that of the angels, notes that the priest is "the fire bearing 'seraph,' because he holds the living Coal." Here, the coal is Christ in the form of consecrated eucharistic bread. Symeon of Thessalonica, *On the Priesthood and the Holy Eucharist: According to St. Symeon of Thessalonica, Patriarch Kallinikos of Constantinople and St. Mark Eugenikos of Constantinople*, trans. G. D. Dragas (Rollinsford, 2004), 1–2. In a slight variation on the theme, marginalia from a mid-to-late fourteenth-century service book from the Dečani Monastery describes the Virgin, in Slavonic, as "the golden incense, the handle of the staff, the golden lamp." See B. Miljković, "The Serbian Emperor Stefan's Icon from the Hilandar Monastery," *ZRVI* 43 (2006): 328.

22 S. A. Boyd, "A 'Metropolitan' Treasure from a Church in the Provinces: An Introduction to the Study of the Sion Treasure," in *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium: Papers of the Symposium Held May 16–18, 1986*, ed. S. A. Boyd, M. M. Mango, and G. Vikan (Washington, DC, 1992), 22–23.



FIG. 8 Katzion with Virgin Hodegetria from Constantinople (Therapia?), early fourteenth century, bronze, 28.6 cm × 21 cm. Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece, no. 11402 (photo © Benaki Museum)



FIG. 9 Hanging censer with scenes from the Life of the Virgin (Sion Censer) from near Kumluca, Turkey, late sixth century, silver, 9.8 cm × 17 cm. Antalya Archaeological Museum, Antalya, Turkey, no. 1019 (photo courtesy of Tera Lee Hedrick)



FIG. 10 Katzion with military saints (Theodore and Demetrios), second half of the thirteenth century, copper sheet and enamel, 5 cm × 32 cm. Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece, no. 11469 (photo © Benaki Museum)

Instead, surviving incense burners picture the patron saints of the churches in which they were used (fig. 10), or stylized bird, floral, and vegetal motifs, which possibly reference the tree of life (fig. 6).²³ Censers that picture these motifs must certainly evoke Paradise, the quintessential realm of sweet smell. An alternate type radically departs from these early censers and instead incorporates Gothic elements. An example from Putna dates to 1470 and features a multilobed chalice-style base surmounted by a miniature Gothic church, complete with windows that incorporate

23 A. Ballian, "Standing Censer with Military Saints," in Evans, *Byzantium*, 128–29; Milovanović and Radojković, *Masterpieces* (n. 4 above), 32.

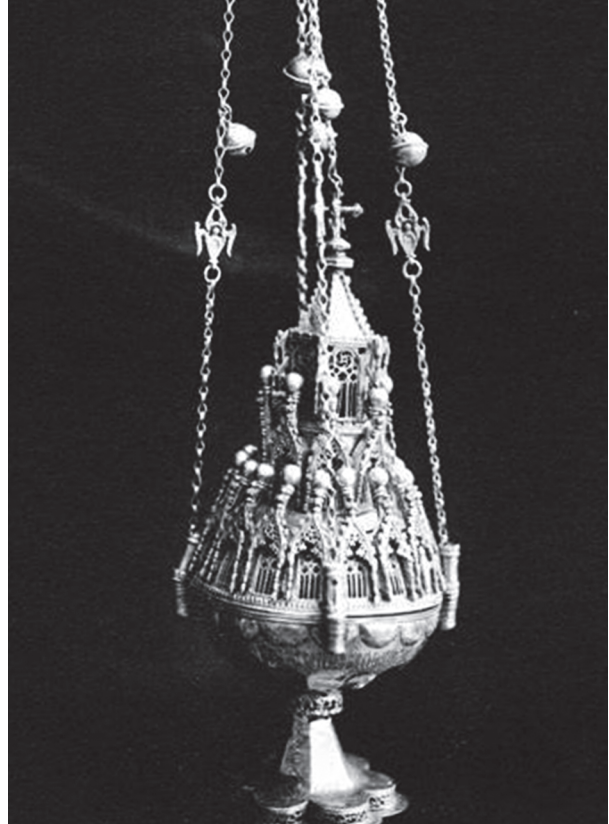


FIG. 11 Swinging censer in the shape of a church from Transylvania, 1470, silver, 40 cm × 20 cm. Putna Monastery Treasury, Romania (photo courtesy of Trafali, *Trésor byzantin et romain du monastère de Poutna* [Paris, 1925])

pointed arches (fig. 11).²⁴ These church-style censers proliferated in the post-Byzantine period, and beautifully reference the associations between the church space, liturgy, and euodia.²⁵

24 O. Trafali, *Trésor byzantin et romain du monastère de Poutna* (Paris, 1925), 13–14. The Bistrița Monastery censer, now in Bucharest, shares a similar form. Both censers are included in the catalog of Romanian metalwork in Nicolescu, *Românie* (n. 4 above), 52.

25 While a departure from incense burners of the early and middle Byzantine periods, the incorporation of Gothic elements is typical of late Byzantine *vasa sacra*. J. Durand, "Innovations gothiques dans l'orfèvrerie byzantine sous les Paléologues," *DOP* 58 (2004): 333–54. Several particularly impressive examples survive in the Vatopedi Monastery. K. Loverdou-Tsagarida, "Byzantine Small Art Works," in *The Holy and Great Monastery of the Vatopaidi: Tradition, History, Art* (Mt. Athos, 1998), 2:475–81. These church-style censers are typically made of silver. See examples from the



FIG. 12 Celestial Liturgy, Church of Christ Pantokrator, Gračanica Monastery (near Pristina, Kosovo), 1319–21 (photo courtesy Blago Fund)

Wall paintings from the period picture different uses for the different types of censers, with *katzia* used in funerary scenes and traditional swinging censers in images of the Celestial Liturgy and other processions.²⁶ At the church of Christ Pantokrator in Gračanica Monastery (1319–21), for example, censers are found in a variety of wall paintings (figs. 12 and 3). In depictions of both the Celestial Liturgy and the Tabernacle, the censers depicted are the classic swinging/hanging shape of an open bowl suspended from three chains, reminiscent of objects such as the Cyprus Censer (fig. 13). In contrast, *katzia* are most commonly depicted in images of the myrrh-bearing women. Picturing the Marys at the tomb with censers rather than jars of anointing oils was not an innovation of late Byzantium. Intriguingly, the myrrh-bearing women have been pictured since late antiquity not with unguent jars, but with incense burners. See, for instance, the Monza and Bobbio ampullae, or the



FIG. 13 Hanging censer with busts of saints (Cyprus Censer) from Lambousia, Cyprus, silver, 6.7 cm × 10.9 cm. British Museum, London, M&ME 99, 4-25, 3 (photo © British Museum)

Benaki Museum and the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos, in G. Oikonomake-Papadopoulou, *Εκκλησιαστικά αργυρά* (Athens, 1980), 2–23.

²⁶ Such rules are certainly not hard and fast. For instance, the image of the Dormition of the Virgin in Constantinople's Chora Monastery (fig. 2 above) features swinging censers rather than *katzia*.



FIG. 14 Spherical incense burner, sixteenth century, tombac, 10.7 cm. Sadberk Hanım Museum, Istanbul, no. 1234-M. 822 (photo © Sadberk Hanım Museum)



FIG. 15 Spherical incense burner from the Mamlūk Dynasty, made for Badr al-Din Baysari, 1277–79, brass inlaid with silver, 18.4 cm. British Museum, London, ME OA 1878.12-30.682 (photo © British Museum)

sixth-century ivory pyxis at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which pictures two women carrying swinging censers in approach to Christ's tomb.²⁷ The images show that the Byzantines clearly conflated the different forms of scent—what was important was the substance

27 A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza, Bobbio)* (Paris, 1958); H. C. Evans, M. Holcomb; and R. Hallma, "The Art of Byzantium," *BMAA* 58, no. 4 (2001):22–23.



FIG. 16 Incense-stick holder, undated, brass, 21 cm × 8.5 cm. Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, no. 63 (photo © Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts)

itself, not whether it had been cooked into a liquid to be poured or left as a resin to burn. By referencing the use of incense in services and processions instead of adhering strictly to the narrative account, such images create links between contemporary liturgical practice and the events of biblical history, which collapses the gap between past and present and emphasizes the continuity between contemporary worshipper and biblical saint. Images from the Palaiologan period continue this practice, but typically feature *katzia*, rather than swinging censers, as a register of a change in style. At Gračanica, the depiction of the Virgin with the myrrh-bearers at the tomb shows the women with a *katzion* with a long handle that terminates in a covered thurible (fig. 3).

Ottoman incense burners likewise came in a variety of forms. Although there are some composite pieces that include blue-and-white Ming dynasty ceramics, the focus here will be on metal burners.²⁸ One exceptional

28 See, for example, the large censer consisting of a Ming garden seat and a tall canopy in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts,

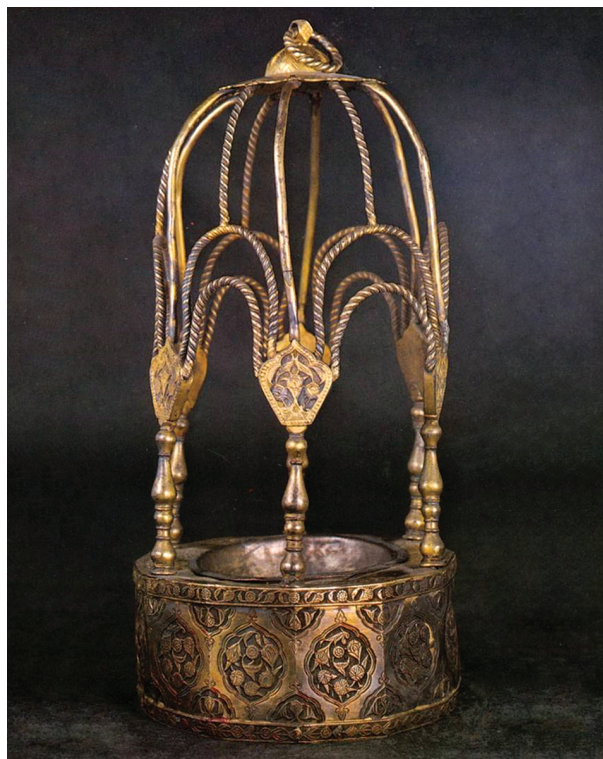


FIG. 17 Hanging censer, probably second half of sixteenth century, silver, 16.5 cm × 34.5 cm. Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, no. 15 (photo © Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts)



FIG. 18 Hanging censer, second half of the sixteenth century, silver sheet around mortar base, with decoration of semiprecious gemstones and gold wire, canopy made of silver wire, 31 cm × 7 cm. Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, no. 25 (photo © Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts)

censer in the collection of the Sadberk Hanım Museum, in Istanbul, dates to the sixteenth century, is spherical with a suspension mechanism inside, and it emulates Mamlūk censers of the same kind (figs. 14 and 15).²⁹ A much more frequently found type, called *buhur şamdan*,

no. 29. See R. Krahrl, *Chinese Ceramics in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul: A Complete Catalogue* (London, 1986), 1:50, 2:669.

29 Sadberk Hanım Museum, Istanbul, Inv. no. 1234-M.822. Published in H. Bilgi, *Reunited after Centuries: Works of Art Restored to Turkey by the Sadberk Hanım Museum* (Istanbul, 2005), 100–101. For a Mamlūk censer comparable in form, if not in decoration, see, for example, ME OA 1878.12-30.682 in the British Museum, London, published in R. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (London, 1993), fig. 87, and E. Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, DC, 1981), 58–59. There is also a little-known cast copper parallel in the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art, probably of Seljuk manufacture and reminiscent of Seljuk lamps and Byzantine cast polykandela. See A. Ballian, ed., *Benaki Museum: A Guide to the Museum of Islamic*

looks very much like a candleholder, but instead holds incense sticks (fig. 16). So-called *buhurdan*, intended for burning incense pastilles or similar-sized aromatics, can be further classified into three types based on form and usage: hanging, stationary, and portable.³⁰ Preserved in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, in Istanbul, are two of the first type, and each consists of a weighted hexagonal base with a depression for the fumigatory and a wire canopy (figs. 17 and 18).³¹ While one of these

Art (Athens, 2006), fig. 140. We are grateful to the anonymous peer reviewer for drawing our attention to this object.

30 This classification has been introduced in Ergin, “Fragrance of the Divine” (n. 4 above).

31 No. 15 has been published in Y. Petsopoulos, ed., *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1982), cat. no. 51. No. 25 is discussed in Ergin, “Fragrance of the Divine” (n. 4 above), 85.



FIG. 19 Stationary censer, late seventeenth century, brass, 21 cm × 24 cm. Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, no. 46 (photo © Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts)



FIG. 20 Portable censer, first half of the seventeenth century, silver, 17.5 cm × 11 cm. Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, no. 16 (photo © Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts)

canopied hexagonal censers (fig. 17) sports rows of medallions around its base, the other (fig. 18) belongs to what has been termed the “bejeweled aesthetic” and features on the base semiprecious stones that, together with gold wire scrolls, were set into jade cartouches.³² According to the inventory register, these hanging censers were suspended from the ceiling of the tomb of Sultan Ahmed (no. 15) and the tomb of Ayyub al-Ansari (no. 25).³³ The weighted base prevented the censer from swinging during a draft and scattering the burning fumigatory on the mausoleum (*türbe*) visitors below.

The second, stationary type includes chalice-shaped incense burners with a hinged and perforated, usually hemispheric lid, mounted on a (sometimes) footed tray. A typical example can be found in censer no. 46, in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, which is made of brass, dates to the seventeenth century, and was removed from the tomb of Şehzade Mehmed in the Şehzade Mosque (Istanbul) (fig. 19). Its overall shape is that of a pomegranate on three legs. The plain round tray supports three S-shaped legs holding up the trilobed receptacle. The equally trilobed openwork lid is decorated with incised flowers, spiraling stems, and thick leaves, and terminates in a knobby finial. This and other tray-mounted censers are stationary objects that would have been placed on a surface after being lit. The buhurcu’s task was to fill the burner with the fumigatory and possibly also hot embers, select the appropriate location within the space, and set it down on an even surface that would not be damaged.

While this type of censer can be moved within the mosque or mausoleum, it should still be differentiated from censers that were explicitly intended to be carried. Hence, the third, portable type consisted of a similarly shaped burner, but without a tray and with a handle attached on the side, allowing the buhurcu to hold it in his hand while fumigating. Of this third type, censer no. 16 in the Museum of Turkish and

32 J. Allan and J. Raby, “Metalwork,” in Petsopoulos, *Tulips*, 21–22.

33 On the importance of this tomb for the Ottoman dynasty, see Ç. Kafesçioğlu, *Constantinople/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park, PA, 2010), 45–51; and G. Necipoğlu, “Dynastic Imprints on the Cityscape: The Collective Message of Imperial Funerary Mosque Complexes in Istanbul,” in *İslam Dünyasında Mezarlıklar ve Defin Gelenekleri*, ed. J.-L. Bacqué-Gammont and A. Tibet (Ankara, 1996), 23–26.

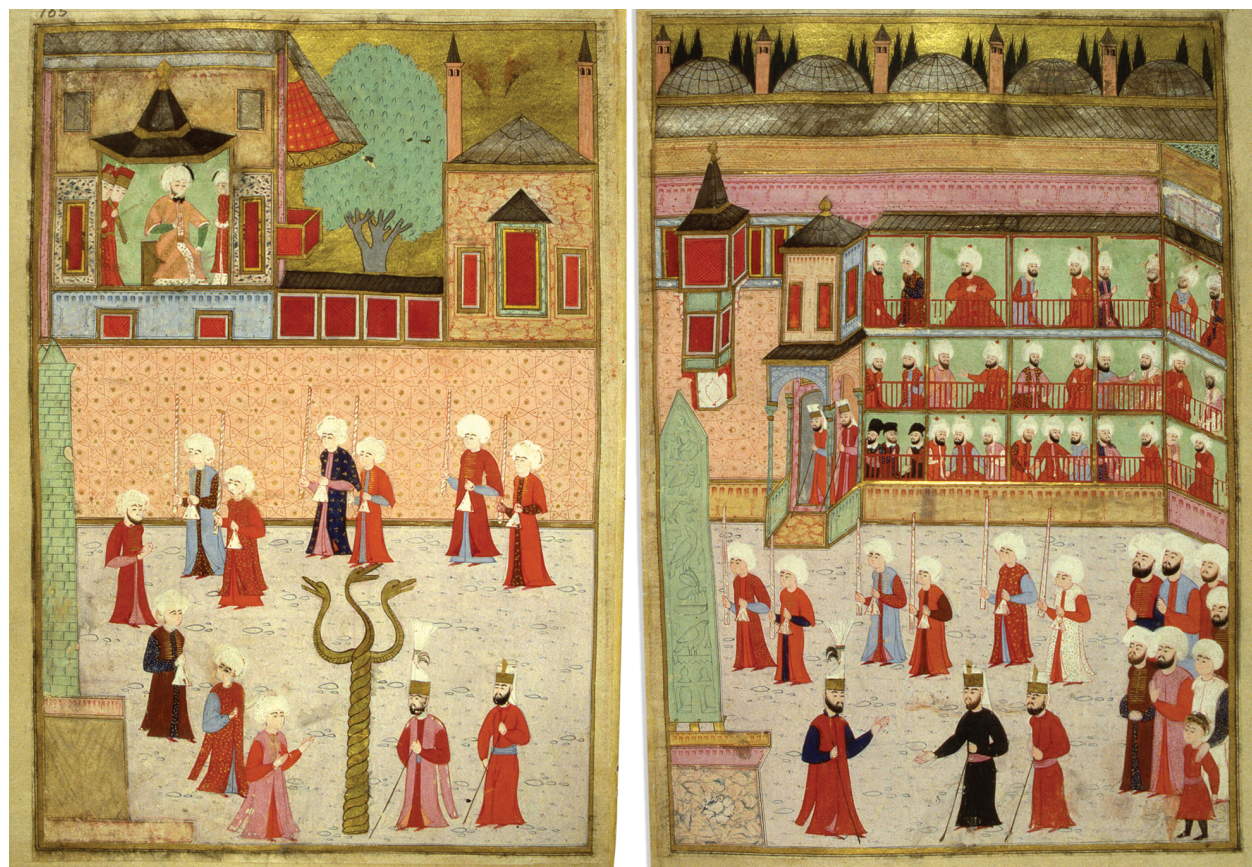


FIG. 21 Procession of the guild of herbalists, by Nakkaş Osman, in *Surname-i Hümayun*, Topkapı Palace Museum (Istanbul), H. 1344, fols. 164b–65a, ca. 1582 (photo © Topkapı Palace Museum)

Islamic Arts is a good representative (fig. 21). This type of footed, spherical, and cast-silver censer—popular in both Christian and Muslim contexts between the seventeenth and nineteenth century—has a hinged open-work lid and a hollow handle.³⁴ Another variant of this kind features a handle curving toward and meeting the ground; the greater stability created by this second “foot” reduces the risk of the object tipping over and spilling the smoldering contents.³⁵ The illustrated

example dates to about 1600 and used to be located in the tomb of Sultan Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603) in the precinct of Hagia Sophia, as testified by the traced inscription “Sultan Mehmed Khan.”³⁶ The buhurcu

(I.203-3706), see F. Bodur, *Türk Maden Sanatı/The Art of Turkish Metalworking* (Istanbul, 1987), 117. Furthermore, thanks to one anonymous reviewer, we have been made aware of a tombac mount for a Kütahya ceramic censer in the Benaki Museum that features the same handle variant, and of the fact that this variant was also produced and used in a Christian setting, in Braşov, Romania; see C. Nicolescu, *Argintăria laică şi religioasă în Țările Române, sec. XIV–XIX* (Bucharest, 1968), no. 249. In the tombac technique, a copper surface receives a coating of gold dust mixed with mercury. During the firing the evaporating mercury allows the gold to fuse with the surface. The resulting coat is not only decorative, but also protective.

³⁶ Petsopoulos, *Tulips*, pl. 49; D. Baykan, ed., *The Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts* (Istanbul, 2002), 303. There also exists a less sophisticated version of the same censer, no. 51, in the same

³⁴ We are grateful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

³⁵ Examples of this variant can be found in various collections. For a seventeenth-century censer with a handle that “curves” due to a later addition, now in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (no. 24), see A. Ertuğ, O. Grabar, and Ş. Aksoy, *In Pursuit of Excellence: Works of Art from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts* (Istanbul, 1993), 121, pl. 59f. For an object (ca. 1600) in a private collection in London, see Petsopoulos, *Tulips*, cat. no. 50. For such an eighteenth-century censer in the Sadberk Hanım Museum

would have filled and lit portable burners such as this one, waited for the fragrant smoke to start rising and then walked around the prayer hall or, as in this case, around the cenotaphs in the tomb, all the while carrying the object by its handle.

Except for such unusual circumstances where Chinese ceramics with figural painting were integrated, Ottoman censers were decorated exclusively with nonfigural ornamentation. Most commonly, split-leaf arabesques were engraved into the openwork of the lid or on the base, as exemplified in figure 20 above. Inscriptions can also be found on a good number of incense burners, usually on those of a higher quality, and they give information about the identity of the deceased whose tomb they were intended to perfume (“Sultan Mehmed Khan,” “the late Ayşe Sultan”), or sometimes also on the identity of the donor (“Belonging to Gevherhan Sultan,” “Mistress Havva, wet-nurse of Sultan Osman, 1033 [1642]”).³⁷ Dates are rarely added; assay marks are present on many objects, but are often badly rubbed and therefore illegible.

Late Byzantine liturgical objects, like their earlier predecessors, are a veritable cornucopia of inscriptions that feature prayers used during the liturgy as well as the names of donors.³⁸ In contrast, many

surviving censers depart from this tradition, despite the fact that typika record the donation of censers alongside the donation of other liturgical objects. The reason may be purely practical. Censers, particularly katzia, do not provide much space on which to feature an inscription. It may also merely be another accident of survival. Several of the extant katzia come from the same molds. Laskarina Bouras matched a Benaki katzion to two other surviving examples (fig. 7), one from the Mystra tomb and another in the treasury of the Great Meteoron, and thus suggests that these censers were mass produced.³⁹ Perhaps donors could not afford either the time or money to personalize them. Since so few late Byzantine custom examples survive, it is possible that they typically featured inscriptions, like many post-Byzantine examples.⁴⁰ However, even clearly lavish censers from late Byzantium, like the Benaki’s Virgin Hodegetria katzion (fig. 8), lack either a donor inscription or a reference to a specific liturgical prayer. In this case, for instance, while the Virgin and Child make up the majority of the space on the handle, the foliate design of the background could easily have been replaced by text.

Inscriptions are typically understood as essential to the function of objects donated to Byzantine

museum, which indicates that molds were used for the components, and that the decoration and the material could be adjusted to the buyers’ purse.

³⁷ See, for example, censer no. 16 in Baykan, *Turkish and Islamic Art*; no. 25: *Sâhib-i Gevher Han Sultan*; no. 18: *Sultan ‘Osman dâyesi Havva Kadın* 1033.

³⁸ For an overview of this material, see S. A. Boyd, “Art in the Service of the Liturgy: Byzantine Silver Plate,” in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, ed. L. Safran (University Park, PA, 1998), 152–85. For a more detailed discussion of donor inscriptions on sixth-century liturgical silver, see I. Ševčenko, “The Sion Treasure: The Evidence of the Inscriptions,” in Boyd, Mango, and Vikan, *Ecclesiastical Silver* (n. 23 above), 39–56. For instance, nearly all extant altar veils (*epitaphioi*) from late Byzantium feature liturgical formulae, while over half also include donor inscriptions. Likewise, chalices and patens almost invariably feature the liturgical injunction to eat and drink of the body or blood, although only examples from more elite contexts also feature the name of the donor. These eucharistic inscriptions are included on even the most modest chalices and patens. For copper examples, see M. M. Mango, “The Significance of Byzantine Tinned Copper Objects,” in *Θυμιάματα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα*, ed. Benaki Museum (Athens, 1994), 221–27. For two ceramic examples, see E. A. Ivison, “‘Supplied for the Journey to Heaven’: A Moment of West–East Cultural

Exchange: Ceramic Chalices from Byzantine Graves,” *BMGS* 24 (2000): 147–93. For a discussion of epigrams on liturgical objects from late Byzantium, see T. L. Hedrick, “The Power of Objects: *Arts Sacra* and the Negotiation of the Sacred in Late Byzantium” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, forthcoming).

³⁹ Bouras likewise argues that a katzion from Belgrade and another from the Markov Monastery share the same mold. She has also detected similarities between the censers and lighting devices, and suggests that the two types of objects may have been made in the same workshops. Bouras, “Επτά θυμιατήρια” (n. 18 above), 70.

⁴⁰ The Putna Gothic-style swinging censer, for instance, carries an inscription in Slavonic, noting that the object was the gift of Ștefan cel Mare of Moldavia on 12 April 1470. Trafali, *Trésor* (n. 25 above), 13. Another Romanian censer, the example from Bistrița (ca. 1500), records that the object was given by Brother Craiovesti to the monastery. Nicolescu, *Românie* (n. 4 above), 52. An anonymous reader helpfully pointed out that of the more than twenty censers included in a 1968 catalog of church silver in the Bucharest Museum, the majority are inscribed with a donor’s name. Nicolescu, *Argintăria*, 216–37. This seems to be a general phenomenon. Of the three censers illustrated in the *Patmos: Treasures of the Monastery* catalog, for instance, two feature donor inscriptions. G. Oikonomaki-Papadopoulos, “Church Silver,” in *Patmos: Treasures of the Monastery*, ed. A. D. Kominiis (Athens, 1988), 221–39.

churches. Sharon Gerstel has argued that since liturgical vessels were used at the altar, where the laity could not go, the inscribed objects function as stand-ins for donors and their communities, allowing the faithful to “enter the sanctuary without trespassing the barrier.”⁴¹ Likewise, the frequent appearance of liturgical formulas on donated objects allowed lay patrons to participate in the climactic prayers of the service, such as the command to “drink this, all of you,” that were otherwise voiced only by the clergy.⁴² Perhaps, though, the very multivalent properties of incense made censers less appropriate for either of these functions. Incense was used throughout the church repeatedly, and thus was not associated with one single ritual moment. Nor was the censer used exclusively at the altar. Unlike the other objects, scent was as much a part of the experience of the nave as it was of the sanctuary. This diffuseness of purpose might have made it a less popular site for either type of inscription than other liturgical objects.

Despite their lapidary nature, Ottoman inscriptions still allow for some conclusions regarding donation practices. The objects used in the mosque were not inscribed and therefore were probably not donated by individuals, but instead bought with endowment funds. Inscribed censers have been found in tombs and hence were donated by individual persons to the deceased—to sultans, other male and female dynastic family members, and saints alike. More often than not, the donor remained anonymous; regardless, God was witness to the creation of a fragrant bond between donor and deceased beneficiary, with the latter serving as a conduit for blessings accumulated by the former.

The Incense

Censers were meant not only to be seen, but primarily to spread scent. The incense used in the Byzantine liturgical context was typically a resin or gum, either a single product or a compound, formed from solid

irregular beads taken from trees or bushes. The resins burned slowly, exhaling smoke when placed atop hot coals at the bottom of an incense burner.⁴³ The exact recipes for incense are not usually clear, and they certainly varied from location to location, but, historically, preferred scents seem to have included storax, myrrh, and frankincense.⁴⁴ The latter two were particularly favored because they were among the gifts of the magi to the infant Jesus.⁴⁵ By the late Byzantine period, the regions where the trees grew that provided these resins were no longer Byzantine territories. Storax comes from southwestern Anatolia and Syria.⁴⁶ Balsam (*Commiphora opobalsamum*), from the family Burseraceae, comes from the bark of a small tree native to Egypt and Palestine.⁴⁷ Both frankincense (*Boswellia carteri* or *B. sacra*) and myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), likewise from the family Burseraceae, are native to the southern Arabian peninsula, although their trees also grow in Egypt and Palestine.⁴⁸

The Byzantines continued to use these scents even after they had lost the territories in which they were produced. Spikenard, myrrh, frankincense, and balsam are all listed in the regulations for the perfumer's guild in the *Book of the Eparch*, which dates to around 900, during the reign of Leo VI.⁴⁹ Clearly,

43 Caseau, “Euodia” (n. 3 above), 19–21. Intriguingly, however, the typikon of the Kecharitomene Monastery in Constantinople (1110–16) specifies the use of “rose-essence” along with “bitter aloes and incense” at the feast of the Dormition of the Virgin. How the rose-essence was used is not specified in the text. See *BMFD* 2:697. As we shall see later in this section, rose water played a large role in Ottoman censuring practice. Roses and rose water had been part of the Mediterranean world for millennia, valued for the same medicinal, purificatory, and luxurious properties as other scents. Pliny the Elder, for instance, describes twelve rose types and the regions in which they grow, as well as roses' diuretic and astringent properties. M. P. Widriechner, “History and Utilization of Rosa Damascena,” *Economic Botany* 35, no. 1 (1981): 45. Roses were seemingly less central to Byzantine practice, even as their use increased in the censuring rituals of various Islamic dynasties, including those of the Ottomans.

44 See Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon* (n. 3 above), 22. See also Caseau, “Euodia” (n. 3 above), 19–21, and A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Totnes, 2003), 45.

45 Matthew 2:11.

46 Dalby, *Flavours*, 45.

47 B. Grami, “Perfumery Plant Materials as Reflected in Early Persian Poetry,” in Jung, *Perfumery and Ritual* (n. 3 above), 41.

48 Ibid., 44, 46–47.

49 E. H. Freshfield, *Roman Law in the Later Roman Empire: Byzantine Guilds Professional and Commercial* (Cambridge,

41 S. E. J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle, 1999), 12–13.

42 For a discussion of the silent recitation of Eucharistic prayers, see R. F. Taft, “Was the Eucharistic Anaphora Recited Secretly or Aloud? The Ancient Tradition and What Became of It,” in *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the Neighboring Christian East: An International Symposium in Honor of the 40th Anniversary of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary*, ed. R. R. Ervine (Crestwood, 2006), 15–57.

many of the perfumes are imports: the text notes that “when the above articles come from the land of the Chaldees, Trebizond, or any other place, the perfumers shall buy them from the importers on the days appointed by the regulations.”⁵⁰ At least some of the perfumes must have come from Syria. In a section devoted to silk importers, the law specifically notes that, when buying goods from Syrian traders, the silk merchants should restrict themselves to silk, for “perfumes . . . shall be purchased by the . . . perfumers.”⁵¹ While censuring in a religious context was performed only by priests and deacons, such legislation alerts us to the two major secular roles associated with incense: the importers and traders.⁵² The *Book of the Eparch*,

1938), 29–32. The list also includes ambergris, a substance that featured prominently in Ottoman censuring practice, as well as non-resins, such as pepper and cinnamon.

50 Ibid., 30–31.

51 Ibid., 20.

52 Valerie Karras has provided one notable exception to this rule, in the case of women serving as thurifers on Holy Saturday and Easter at the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. A twelfth-century typikon lays out the duties of the order of the Myrophoroi, an order that may have existed as early as the fifth century and lasted through the thirteenth. On Holy Saturday the women cleaned and prepared the oil lamps before the service, and after vespers and the Divine Liturgy, they censed and anointed the church. On Easter, their role was more visible to the whole congregation, as they participated in a ritual reenactment of the encounter with the angel at the empty tomb. The priest, in the role of the angel/Christ called to the women, “Rejoice! Christ is risen!” as the women worshipped at his feet and then rose to cense him. Clearly the women, as Karras notes, “largely mirror, in a stylized and liturgical fashion,” the actions of their biblical predecessors. Such an extraordinary occurrence was unique to the church of the Holy Sepulchre, and consistent with that church’s long interest in mimetically reenacting biblical events. V. A. Karras, “The Liturgical Functions of Consecrated Women in the Byzantine Church,” *TheolSt* 66, no. 1 (2005): 109–14. To this one may add an unusual thirteenth-century fresco that depicts the Dormition of the Virgin Mary on a tenth-century building portion, from Deir al-Surian in Egypt. Here, Mary lies in state, with the apostles gathered in the background, and six handmaidens with thuribles censing her body. See K. Innemée and L. van Rompay, “Deir al-Surian (Egypt): New Discoveries of 2001–2002,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 5, no. 2 (2002): 245–63, here 251–53, pls. 9–11. Quite wonderfully, the *Book of the Eparch* specifically assigns the perfumers market to a space between the Great Church and the Palace, so that “the sweet perfume may waft upwards to the icon [of Christ] and at the same time permeate the vestibule of the imperial palace,” and that the incense serves an honorary function even when sold in the market. Freshfield, *Roman Law*, 31.

however, still leaves us several hundred years shy of the late Byzantine period. The Boilas testament, a will that dates to 1059, specifies the use of *σμυρνίδιον* (myrrh) in oil lamps.⁵³ Closer to the thirteenth century, the Pantokrator Monastery typikon specifically names both myrrh and frankincense, as noted above.⁵⁴ However, the vast majority of the references to incense in both typika and liturgical commentaries use the more general term *θυμίαμα*, making it difficult to know what specific resins were used from the thirteenth century onward.

In contrast, we have ample sources on the precise types of incense used in the Ottoman world. The raw materials from which Ottomans fashioned their fumigatories included animal products, resins, and exotic woods. Because it was frequently mentioned in the hadith and counted among the Prophet’s favored scents, musk—a secretion from the anal glands of the male Siberian musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*)—featured prominently and was also an ingredient added to buhur.⁵⁵ Also frequently mentioned in the hadith, *öd* (wood of the *Agallochum* plant, often mistakenly called aloewood) and *anber* (ambergris) often occur in expense registers of the mosque endowments.⁵⁶ *Agallochum* is a very dense, resinous wood found in India, Southeast Asia, and the islands beyond. It gives off a strong aromatic scent and is used as medicine as well as incense throughout the Islamic world. Both *agallochum* and sandalwood provide raw material for furniture and rosary (*tesbih*) beads; when burned, it exudes a heavy, sweet smell.⁵⁷ Ambergris is secreted in the gall bladder of the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) and floats in the sea or washes onto coastal sands as large lumps; it is flammable, waxlike in substance, and dark gray or black in color.⁵⁸ Like musk, it

53 P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XI^e siècle byzantin* (Paris, 1977), 20–29.

54 See note 11.

55 *EP*, s.v. “Misk.” See also Zohar and Lev, “Trends” (n. 5 above), 23–24. For buhur mixed with musk (*buhur-i misk-amiz*), see G. Prochazka-Eisl, *Das Surname-i Hümayun: Die Wiener Handschrift in Transkription* (Istanbul, 1995), 130.

56 See, for example, BOA, TS.MA.d, 4273/0001–0009, 4282/0002–00011.

57 See *EP*, s.v. “Üd”; Zohar and Lev, “Trends,” 21–23.

58 *EP*, s.v. “Anbar”; Zohar and Lev, “Trends,” 25–26. For a book-length discussion, see C. Kemp, *Floating Gold: A Natural (and Unnatural) History of Ambergris* (Chicago, 2012).

was prized for its earthy and sweet marine smell, and found widespread application in the ancient world. By the sixth century, it counted among the luxury items exported from Constantinople to Europe.⁵⁹ The Ottomans imported their supply from the Indian Ocean and shipped it, together with many other spices and aromatics, to Istanbul.

These different types of raw materials are mentioned in a *narh defteri* that dates to 1640.⁶⁰ According to this register, so-called *öd-i maverdi* (unknown type of *Agallochum*) could be purchased in four different quality grades, costing 13 akçe per *dirhem* (3 grams) for the best, 8 for medium, 4 for low, and 3 for the worst. Ambergris for fumigatories (*anber-i buhur*) was available in the form of tiny pieces weighing one-quarter dirhem (0.75 gram); one piece cost 1 akçe.⁶¹ These small pieces could be burned either in unadulterated form—placed on an ember in the censer’s receptacle—or after mixing with such additives as coal dust, sawdust, and certain kinds of gum. The preparations were then pressed into candle-like sticks, round pastilles, and other shapes.⁶² The abovementioned *Helvahane Defteri* presents two recipes for fumigatory produced in the Topkapı Palace’s pharmacy. For the so-called Prophet’s incense (*buhur-i nebi*), the court pharmacist combined the following: 1 dirhem of ambergris, 15 dirhem of gum benzoin (*asilbend*), 5 dirhem of agallochum (*öd*), 4 dirhem of mastic (*mastaki*), 5 dirhem of saffron, 4 dirhem of *C. opobalsamum* (*mukl*), 5 dirhem of hyacinth (*sümbül*), 5 dirhem of myrtle leaf (*varakü’ul-as*), 6 dirhem of labdanum (*laden*), 1 dirhem of camphor (*kafur*), 3 dirhem of bitter orange peel (*kışr-i turunc*), 3 dirhem of storax (*mey’a*), 3 dirhem of tragacanth gum (*kesira*), the equivalent (*denk*) in musk (*mis*), 8 dirhem of sugar, and a “sufficient quantity” (*kifayet miktar*) of willow

charcoal (*söğüt kömürü*).⁶³ This impressive variety of ingredients was altogether ground into a fine powder, kneaded with rose water, and molded into pastilles.

The Ottoman Scent-Related Professions

The Ottoman professions involved in censing-related tasks included not only the apothecaries and perfume-makers that applied such recipes or the traders and merchants of aromatics, but also the buhurcu, or buhuri, who received a daily salary, as recorded in the abovementioned sixteenth-century vakfiye.⁶⁴ In contrast to Byzantine practice, the buhurcu’s duties were separated from that of the clergy—that is, the imam or the preacher (*vaiz*). Their primary task was to perfume mosques and mausolea; moreover, they were responsible for acquiring the aromatics, either buying them or sometimes having an endowment official buy them; for preparing the incense mixtures; for safekeeping and fuelling the censers; and for fumigating at the times determined by the respective vakfiye. The employment of a buhurcu constituted for mosque patrons a status marker that added a significant sum to an endowment’s expenses. For instance, in the Süleymaniye Mosque, the buhurcu earned a daily salary of 6 akçe, in addition to his daily incense expenditures of 4 akçe.⁶⁵ In comparison, the daily salary of the preacher amounted to 30 akçe, of the Qur’an reciters to between 2 and 6 akçe, and of the janitors to 5 akçe. Based on his salary as well as placement on the list of workers in the vakfiye, the buhurcu occupied a position equivalent to that of reciters, who also shaped the sensory experience of worship, and slightly above that of the cleaning staff, even though the buhurcu also contributed to the cleanliness—by removing unpleasant odors—that is so important for Muslim worship. Altogether, the Süleymaniye’s endowment expended 3,540 akçe per Hijri year (354 days) for fragrance practices, of which

59 A. Dalby, “Some Byzantine Aromatics,” in *Eat, Drink and Be Merry (Luke 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium*, ed. L. Brubaker and K. Linardou (Aldershot, 2007), 52.

60 See Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi* (n. 15 above), passim.

61 The register also lists storax (*asilbend*), a rather cheap fumigatory, since four pieces weighing one-third of a dirhem (1 gram) cost only 1 akçe. Other odoriferous goods mentioned include pomade of ambergris and musk (*kalye-i misk*) and fumigated water (*buhur suyu*). Ibid., 102.

62 N. Yentürk, “Osmanlı Parfümleri,” in Şentürk, *Kutsal Dumandan, Sibirli Damlaya*, 75.

63 Terzioğlu, *Helvahane Defteri* (n. 14 above), 35. The English translations of the terms are from Yentürk, “Osmanlı Parfümleri,” 76–78. The other recipe is for the Sultan’s incense (*buhur-i sultanî*). It contained one çekirdek (0.4 gram) each of ambergris and musk, 1 dirhem (3 gram) each of agallochum, storax (*asilbend*), hyacinth (*sümbül*), gum tragacanth (*kesira*), and *engüşt* (unknown), altogether ground into a powder and combined with rose water before being molded into a pastille.

64 Ergin, “Fragrance of the Divine” (n. 4 above), 88, table 1.

65 Kürkçüoğlu, *Süleymaniye Vakfiyesi* (n. 2 above), 36.

1,416 were for material, and the rest for the perfumer's salary. Special occasions such as the prophet's birthday may have required additional amounts of incense, therefore incurring further expenses.⁶⁶

The Context of Incense Use

The use of incense is ubiquitous in late Byzantine religious practice, part of daily rites such as the Divine Liturgy and the monastic hours, as well as other major religious ceremonies, like baptisms and funerals. Here, we focus on the use of incense during the Divine Liturgy, the most basic and fundamental rite of Byzantine religious life. By the late Byzantine period, incensation occurred at several major points during the Divine Liturgy, including, for example, censuring of the bread and wine for Communion while these elements were prepared in a side chapel before the beginning of the public ritual; censuring of the altar by the deacon at the beginning of the rite, after congregants had assembled; censuring of the Gospel book, choir, congregation, and iconostasis before the readings; censuring of the choir, congregation, and iconostasis as well as the gifts on the altar as they were prepared for communion; and finally, censuring of the altar by the priest and deacon during the prayers for the dead. Likewise, in funeral rites, incense continued to play a key role. Incense burned alongside candles as the body was displayed in the home or church before burial, was carried during the burial procession, and was also burned beside the dead in the tomb, chapel, or mausoleum.

Like the Byzantines, the Ottomans used incense both in worship and for funerary purposes. The religious contexts in which Ottomans deployed fragrance in the form of buhur were twofold. The first may be defined as "liturgical," inside the prayer halls. More specifically, the buhurcu would set the censer "in front of the reciters while they chant the Qur'an in the places reserved for them"—the large tribune (*müezzin mahfili*) placed off-center in the hall, smaller stone pulpits integrated with the prayer hall's walls, movable

wooden pulpits, or merely a corner reserved for them.⁶⁷ Indeed, the inventory records of censers now housed in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts state that some of these objects were removed from a mosque's mahfil to be taken into the museum's collection.⁶⁸ In terms of timing, endowment deeds usually set the condition that mosques should be perfumed on Fridays (the time of the congregational noon prayer) and other holidays (the Sacrifice Feast and the Sugar Feast at the end of Ramadan, the nights of the fasting month of Ramadan, and the Prophet's Birthday).⁶⁹ Hence, incense use occurred at those times when the prayer hall would have been entirely filled with worshippers. The second, and maybe more prominent context, is the funerary one. Mausolea were perfumed at all times, with several individual censers crowded into a single tomb and suspended from the ceiling if they were hanging ones or placed immediately next to the cenotaphs if they were stationary.

Although incense had been used in the liturgy by this period for nearly a millennium, late Byzantium did include several key changes in the use of incense. While incensation in the earlier periods had primarily indicated the presence of the holy in the church, as a marker of divine action, by the late Byzantine period, incense seems to have regained a more specifically sacrificial valence, with incense offered to God for

67 Archives of the General Directorate of Endowments (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü), Ankara, Defter 574, nos. 21–22; Defter 1766, no. 3, Defter 2225, no. 97.

68 Baykan, *Turkish and Islamic Art* (n. 37 above), cat. no. 42, no. 43. Both came from the Yeni Valide Mosque in Istanbul; censer no. 43 was later transferred to the Antalya Archeological Museum in order to augment the collection there.

69 Some endowment deeds indicate that the burning of incense should happen merely "as is customary in other mosques." Although such a vague statement is somewhat frustrating for the researcher, the reliance on a precedent thus defined in the legal context of an endowment deed signed by a judge indicates a well-established and widely known tradition. On the timing of incense use, see also the following accounting record: BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MM/MAD) 5832, 22: "buhur-i huşbu beray-i mühimme ruz-i Mevlud-i Nebi ve ruz-i cema'at ve leyal-i Ramazan ve türbe 980 akçe" ("Pleasant-smelling incense for the important day of the birthday of the Prophet and the day of congregational prayer and the nights of Ramadan and the mausoleum [in the amount of] 980 akçe"). Transcribed in Rogers, "Ottoman Religious Ceremonial," 307.

66 See M. Rogers, "Ottoman Religious Ceremonial in Two Late 16th Century *Meremât Defters* for Süleymaniye, Başbakanlık Arşivi MM/MAD 513 and 5832," in *Acta Viennensia Ottomanica: Akten des 13. CIEPO-Symposiums (Comité International des Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes)*, ed. M. Köhbach, G. Prochazka-Eisl, and C. Römer (Vienna, 1999), 307.

remission of sins or for divine favor.⁷⁰ For instance, from the twelfth century onward, Psalm 50 was added to accompany incensation during the Great Entrance, the procession in which priests and deacons carry the bread and wine to the altar.⁷¹ Psalm 50 entreats God

70 According to Robert Taft, the liturgical use of incense in the early period was almost exclusively honorific. See R. F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Rome, 1975), 154. Taft allows one exception, the censuring of the church at the beginning of the service, which he concedes may be exorcistic or fumigatory in nature. *Ibid.*, 151. For Taft, this is the only obvious conclusion: the gifts and the altar were censured before communion. The gifts and altar were, of course, already sanctified, and not in need of the purifying power of incense. Taft's conclusions here seem a bit narrow. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Beatrice Caseau have convincingly argued that incense was adopted so enthusiastically by Christians because of its fluid and myriad meanings (exorcistic, fumigatory, medicinal, honorific, sacrificial, etc.), all of which could be appropriated by a liturgical context. However, like Taft, both Harvey and Caseau argue against the sacrificial use of incense during the Constantinian and immediate post-Constantinian periods, when "reminiscences of pagan altars were still in the mind of the faithful." See Caseau, "Incense and Fragrances" (n. 3 above), 91. After the threat of paganism was past, however, "incense began to be offered to God or to a saint in order to gain health and remission of sins." *Ibid.* By the late Byzantine period, such a concern was long since moot. The recitation of Psalm 50 in conjunction with incensation fully registers this shift back toward a sacrificial use of incense, which was also indicated by the burgeoning use of incense blessing prayers from the tenth century onward and which occurred during both the preparatory prothesis rites and at the reading of the Gospel and elsewhere. Such prayers, with minor variations, offer incense as sacrifice in exchange for the gift of the Holy Spirit, as in Symeon of Thessalonike: "We offer incense to you, Christ God, as a sweet fragrance. Having received it on your super-celestial altar, send down upon us in return the grace of your all-holy Spirit," *Liturgical Commentaries* (n. 8 above), 233. For a history of the incense blessing prayers, see J. Mateos, *La célébration de la Parole dans la liturgie byzantine* (Rome, 1971), 137–39, and E. Velkovska, "Una preghiera dell'incenso nell'Euchologio slavo del Sinai," *BiblEphL* 110 (1996): 257–61. See also Taft, *Great Entrance*, 159.

71 While it is certain that Psalm 50 was added to the Great Entrance during or after the twelfth century, the particulars remain somewhat hazy. Robert Taft notes that the use of Psalm 50 to accompany the Great Entrance incensation varies from manuscript to manuscript, "as is usual with such late, secondary formulae," but that "these formulae are all medieval additions and are not found in any of the early manuscripts." Taft, *Great Entrance*, 250, 159. Taft cites the thirteenth-century British Museum Harl. 5561 as the first to pair Psalm 50 with the incensation of the altar immediately preceding the Entrance, and the fourteenth-century diataxis of Philotheos as the first to pair Psalm 50 with the deposition of the gifts. *Ibid.*, 161. He later notes (*ibid.*, 250), however, that the earliest references to the use of Psalm 50 at the deposition

to "blot out" the worshipper's iniquities and accept "the sacrifices of righteousness," both "a broken and contrite heart" and "burnt offering and whole burnt offering."

The late Byzantine liturgy also featured incensation of the gathered congregation, including laity and choir.⁷² Prior to this point, assembled worshippers had not been specifically censured, only the church, clergy, gospel, and gifts at the altar. In some ways, this new practice would not have dramatically changed the rite. From the Constantinian period onward, the act of inhaling incense during the Divine Liturgy would have assured worshippers that they were being "remade and renewed into [their] pre-Fallen state," with scent playing a key role in the larger transformative project of the Liturgy.⁷³ Scent itself was thought

comes from marginalia in the twelfth-century Paris Gr. 347, although "the date of this addition" is unknown.

72 In his *On the Sacred Liturgy*, Symeon of Thessalonike describes "some priests" who, after censuring the altar during the prothesis rites, "also incense both the whole church and people." Symeon's text implies that other incensations, such as those at the Great Entrance or Gospel reading, might also have expanded to include the people, since Symeon further adds that "each incensation occurs in this way" (*Liturgical Commentaries*, 237). Taft notes that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts include incensation of the sanctuary, altar, priest, and gifts, but do not include people or iconostasis, which are added only later in post-Byzantine printed texts. However, Taft does direct the reader to Symeon's comment "that each incensation occurs in the way," highlighting the possibility that the incensation of the people at repeated points in the service could already have been practiced by the fifteenth century. Taft, *Great Entrance*, 158–59. For Taft and others, such practices point to the "leveling out" of the various liturgical incensations characteristic of the late and post-Byzantine periods, when "what is censed at one [liturgical moment] is censed at all the others," a practice that "destroys totally the specific object and hence meaning of the individual rite." *Ibid.*, 155. The honorific use of incense during the Gospel reading, for instance, is undermined when the whole church is censed with the book. According to Taft, censuring the people during the Great Entrance was not widespread prior to the fourteenth century, as the diataxis of Philotheos requires the deacon at the Great Entrance to cense "the altar on all four sides, the whole sanctuary, the priest, and the gifts of the prothesis credence," but does not mention the people. However, the practice may have already been on the rise as early as the twelfth century. Taft notes that a twelfth- or thirteenth-century manual in Athens specifically instructs the deacon to cense "before the holy altar only," suggesting that by this period the practice of censuring participants and iconostasis had already begun. *Ibid.*, 158.

73 Harvey, *Scenting Salvation* (n. 3 above), 9. In his *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, Nicholas Kabasilas (ca. 1323–1392) affirms

to have a transformative power, the ability to affect change.⁷⁴ However, this assurance must have become even more potent as the laity not only worshipped in a space redolent with holy smells, but were specifically censured by the clergy. Through this rite, perhaps, the people would have understood themselves to be sanctified, to be made, in the words of Psalm 50, “whiter than snow.”

For churchgoers in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, this assurance may have been particularly necessary. By the late Byzantine period, members of the laity were increasingly distanced from the culmination of the liturgy, the Eucharist, which they took as seldom as once a year. Nor did they have full aural or visual access to the sanctuary: priests recited prayers of consecration inaudibly, while the icons arranged on the chancel barrier (which would eventually develop into the iconostasis) blocked the congregation’s view of the altar.⁷⁵ Unable to partake in the liturgy’s ultimate site of transformation, the ingestion of the bread and wine, the new action of perfuming the worshippers would have provided them with an alternate path of sanctification.

In the funeral liturgy, too, the use of incense continued to play a major role, as it had in earlier periods.⁷⁶ The Pantokrator typikon, for instance, specifically allocates funds for the priest who officiates funerals to buy incense on behalf of the deceased.⁷⁷ As the dead were lying in state, incense would have been a practical necessity to shield mourners from the scent of decay.⁷⁸ Apart from this more banal function, the myriad uses of incense—purificatory, prophylactic, symbolic, and

so on—would have continued to be uniquely suitable.⁷⁹ At the burial, as funeral rites emphasized the rest of the deceased in “a place of light, a place of refreshment, a place of repose, from which pain, sorrow, and sighing have fled,” incense allowed mourners to smell the paradise to which the deceased had departed.⁸⁰ Inside the tomb, the burning of incense would have been both honorific and sacrificial, with the deceased receiving a “spiritual benefit of the same sort as that achieved by the prayers and works of charity offered in their memory.”⁸¹ Such acts would have connected the mourners not only to a general, pan-Mediterranean funerary tradition, but to the most important “funeral” of the Byzantine imagination, that is, the visit of the myrrh-bearing women to the tomb of Christ. With the emphasis on the role of Joseph of Arimathea and the myrrh-bearing women both in the readings of the Easter liturgy and in wall painting, mourners must have identified with these saints as they mimicked their actions and carried censors to a tomb.⁸² Although late Byzantine funeral

the sanctifying power of each aspect of the liturgy—prayers, readings, and ceremonies—which all culminate in the ingestion of the Eucharist. Through this process, the worshipper is “changed from glory to glory,” that is to say, from the lesser to that which is greatest of all.” See N. Kabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty (Crestwood, 2002), 30. Indeed, both the breathing in and smelling of sweet fragrance would have served as a foretaste of the body’s ultimate transformation in resurrection, when it would no longer be subject to putrefaction and decay. See Harvey, *Scenting Salvation* (n. 3 above), 132.

74 Caseau, “Incense and Fragrances” (n. 3 above), 78.

75 For a brief description of the lay worshipper at church in late Byzantium, see Gerstel, *Beholding* (n. 42 above), 1–2.

76 E. Velkovska, “Funeral Rites According to the Byzantine Liturgical Sources,” *DOP* 55 (2001): 27.

77 *BMFD* 2:762.

78 Velkovska, “Funeral,” 27.

79 Caseau, “Incense and Fragrances” (n. 3 above), 85.

80 Velkovska, “Funeral,” 23–24.

81 *Ibid.*, 27.

82 The Palaiologan period saw increasing numbers of Crucifixion and post-Crucifixion accounts read at both the monastic hours and Divine Liturgy. N. Zarras, “The Iconographical Cycle of the Eothina Gospel Pericopes in Churches from the Reign of King Milutin,” *Zograf* 31 (2006–7): 95–113. Likewise, the cult of Mary Magdalene expanded dramatically at the end of the thirteenth century. Certainly, she was part of the more general emphasis on Passion and post-Resurrection events characteristic of Byzantine devotion during this period. For example, Lamentation images began in the middle Byzantine period and flourished in the following centuries. For the development of Lamentation imagery, see I. Spatharakis, “The Influence of the Lithos in the Development of the Iconography of the Threnos,” in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. D. Mouriki (Princeton, 1995), 435–41. The Lamentation was also popularized in other forms, particularly in verse, at both learned and popular levels: a service of Lament was added to the Holy Week liturgy, see N. P. Ševčenko, “The Service of the Virgin’s Lament Revisited,” in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, ed. L. Brubaker and M. Cunningham (Farnham, 2011), 247–62. Widely popular hymns of lament also circulated in the vernacular. See, for example, M. Alexiou, “The Lament of the Virgin in Byzantine Literature and Modern Greek Folk-Song,” *BMGS* 1 (1975): 111–40. More specifically, Vicky Foskolou argues that the cult of Mary Magdalene filled a void in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade; although so many of Constantinople’s relics had been lost, Mary Magdalene’s remained in the city. V. Foskolou, “Mary Magdalene between East and West: Cult and Image, Relics

texts stressed the horror of death as much as they did the hope of salvation, this mimetic activity would have served to connect modern Byzantines to the ancient promise of resurrection.⁸³

The Function and Meaning of Censing

Much like for pagans and Christians, for Muslim Ottomans the practice of censing in mosque and mausoleum united a variety of functions and meanings: a pleasant smell was synonymous with cleanliness and purity (as mentioned above, in the list of mosque employees in the endowment charters, buhurus were ranked between Qur'an reciters and cleaning personnel). The quelling of disagreeable odors during communal worship—especially the large crowds that gathered on Fridays and major holidays and emitted unpleasant exhalations, even when bathed beforehand—are also emphasized in numerous hadith that concern the Prophet's mosque and ritual ablution.⁸⁴ The Prophet went so far as to forbid mosque attendance to believers who had consumed garlic or onion, and doubtlessly inspired by this hadith, the Ottoman intellectual Mustafa Âli (d. 1600) equally advised against consuming these fragrant vegetables in an etiquette book for Ottoman gentlemen.⁸⁵ Shortly after the Prophet's death, the second caliph, 'Umar (r. 634–

644), introduced to the Prophet's mosque in Medina a censer that he had acquired in Syria, described as having figural decoration and therefore likely to have been intended for usage in a church. Hence, censing was adopted as a "palpable imitation of the custom of the [Christian] Church," becoming a requirement for mosques under the Umayyad dynasty (r. 661–750).⁸⁶ Because jinn and other evil spirits were said to reside in foul-smelling places, censing also had an apotropaic function; both the living and the souls of the deceased needed to be protected from these forces.⁸⁷

Descriptions of paradise in hadith and narrative literature place great emphasis on beautiful odor, and this also influenced olfactory attitudes in a variety of contexts, whether liturgical, funerary, or private. Paradise itself is described as having soil that smells as sweet as musk.⁸⁸ Houris, the creatures populating paradise, are "made of musk between their feet and knees, of amber between their knees and breasts, and of camphor upwards of their chest."⁸⁹ Believers entering paradise will also partake in a pleasant olfactory experience: "their combs will be of gold, and the fuel used in their braziers will be the aloes, and their sweat will smell like musk."⁹⁰ Whoever arrives in paradise will be given a banquet, and birds whose wings have been immersed in perfume will sprinkle them with amber and musk.⁹¹

The use of fragrance marked mosque and mausoleum as apart from the ordinary, evoked a link to paradise, pointed at the presence of the divine, and sacralized the space. Equally, fragrances sanctified specific moments of crucial importance for the

and Politics in the Late Thirteenth-Century Mediterranean," *DOP* 66 (2012): 288–89.

83 Velkovska, "Funeral" (n. 77 above), 45.

84 For instance, the Prophet instructed a group of Muslims who worked as laborers and attended Friday prayer, without having washed, to bathe and perfume themselves before joining prayer in order to avoid distracting their coreligionists from worship. Al-Qushayri, *Sahih Muslim* (n. 12 above), bk. 4, no. 1839. Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (n. 12 above), vol. 3, bk. 34, no. 330. For a detailed account, see this hadith collection of the Maliki rite: Abu Muhammad al-Husayn ibn Mas'ud ibn Muhammad al-Farra' al-Baghawi, *Mishkat al-Masabih*, trans. J. Robson (Lahore, 1975), 1:109. Another hadith explains the impetus for scenting the prayer hall: someone had spat inside the first mosque and upon seeing mucus close to the qibla the Prophet cleaned it with a twig and applied sweet-smelling scent to that very spot. The text of the hadith clearly states: "This is why you should apply scent to your mosques." Al-Qushayri, *Sahih Muslim* (n. 12 above), bk. 27, no. 5601.

85 "Whoever has eaten this plant should neither come near us nor pray with us." Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (n. 12 above), vol. 1, bk. 12, no. 815; see also no. 814; vol. 9, bk. 92, no. 458. Mustafa Ali, *The Ottoman Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century: Mustafa Ali's Mevaidü'n-Nefais fi Kevaidi'l-Mecalis, Table of Delicacies*

Concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings, trans. D. S. Brookes (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 74.

86 *EP*, s.v. "Masdjid."

87 *EP*, s.v. "djinn."

88 Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (n. 12 above), vol. 1, bk. 8, no. 345; see also al-Qushayri, *Sahih Muslim* (n. 12 above), bk. 1, no. 313; bk. 41, nos. 6997–98.

89 A. al-Azmeh, "A Rhetoric for the Senses: A Consideration of Muslim Paradise Narratives," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 26 (1995): 227. Al-Azmeh bases his discussion on narratives that emerged in the ninth century and were later systematically recorded by the Egyptian scholar al-Suyuti (d. 1506).

90 Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (n. 12 above), vol. 4, bk. 54, no. 469. See also vol. 4, bk. 54, no. 468; vol. 4, bk. 55, no. 544; and al-Qushayri, *Sahih Muslim* (n. 12 above), bk. 40, nos. 6795–6800.

91 Al-Azmeh, "Rhetoric," 228–29.

community: the Friday noon prayer, the two major holidays, and the nights of Ramadan. The latter occasions could be emphasized even further through increasing the quantity and quality above that of more ordinary days. Incense mixtures known to have been favored by the Prophet or known to have occurred in paradise, according to the hadith, would have been employed not only in Ottoman mosques, where the buhur-ı nebi perfumed the worshippers as described above, but also in other mosques and holy sites across the Islamic world, both backward and forward in time. The Kaaba, for example, constituted such a highly perfumed site, smelling of agallochum, ambergris, rose water, and the like, and received annual gifts of aromatics from Ottoman sultans (who after 1517 were also caliphs) as well as Muslim rulers elsewhere.⁹² The pan-Islamic olfactory link paralleled an equally pan-Islamic auditory link: censers were placed in front of Qur'an reciters while they were chanting, thus "perfuming" the chanted word of God. There existed a strong association between the buhur emanating from the censers placed in front of the reciters and the sacred text chanted by them: the censer was intended to make fragrant the divine word, very similar to the Christian context, where incense was burned before the reading of the Gospel.

The function and meaning of fumigation in the Islamic funerary context exhibits remarkable parallels to the Christian context as well. Indeed, the custom was adopted in full awareness of its origins, as the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim (d. 842) wished to be buried "exactly like the Christians," with candles and incense.⁹³ Since Muslim burials must occur very shortly after death, fumigation with the aim to mask the odor of decay is not of concern; however, the pleasant-smelling smoke honored the dead, and this tradition was continued by the Ottomans in their tombs. The status of the dead was indicated by the degree to which their final resting place was perfumed, with saints and rulers at the upper end of the hierarchy.

92 For Ottoman gifts, see for example BOA, Hatt-i Hümayun (HAT) 550/27130, 27130A, 27133; Cevdet Evkaf (C.EV) 12/595; C.EV 293/14930; Cevdet Saray Mesalihi (C.SM) 153/7694.

93 *EP*, s.v. "Masdjid."

Concluding Remarks

The above comparisons allow for continuities as well as discontinuities to emerge. First, the forms of Ottoman censers exhibit great similarity to those from the Byzantine world, particularly with hanging censers and katzia. A particularly powerful case in point is the close similarity between the katzion shown in the wall painting of the Akathistos Hymn at Markov Monastery (ca. 1375) and portable censer no. 16 (figs. 1 and 20).⁹⁴ Both feature a footed hemispheric incense receptacle and a domed lid, as well as a tubular handle. (The painted katzion does not appear to have any perforations in the lid, but this may very well be due to the image's restoration.) There is a closer similarity between the Ottoman censer and the painted katzion than between the Ottoman censer and other portable incense burners from the Islamic lands east or south of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵ Therefore, we claim that the

94 The exact subject of this wall painting is difficult to determine. Nancy Ševčenko argues that the depiction does not memorialize the original event (when the Icon of the Virgin saved Constantinople from attack in the seventh century), but rather (or also) a regular Friday night procession honoring the Theotokos at the Blachernai and Pantokrator Monasteries in Constantinople. N. P. Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy," *DOP* 45 (1991): 52–56.

95 For typical Islamic censers, see M. Dimand, "A Persian Incense Burner of the Twelfth Century," *BMAA* 32 (1937): 152–54; M. Aga-Oglu, "An Iranian Incense Burner," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 48 (Boston, 1950): 8–10; D. G. Shepherd, "A Lion Incense Burner of the Seljuk Period," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 44 (1957): 115–18; G. Fehervari, "Ein ayyubisches Räuchergefäß mit dem Namen des Sultan al-Malik al-'Adil II," *Kunst des Orients* 5 (1968): 37–54; N. Khalili, "A Recently Acquired Incense Burner in the Khalili Collection," *Muqarnas* 21 (2004), 215–18. For catalogs, see, among others, D. Barrett, *Islamic Metalwork in the British Museum* (London, 1949); G. Fehervari, *Islamic Metalwork of the Eighth to Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection* (London, 1976); G. Curatola and M. Spallanzani, *Metalli islamici dalle collezioni granducali* (Florence, 1981); Petsopoulos, *Tulips* (n. 32 above); E. Atıl, W. T. Chase, and P. Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC, 1985); Ertuğ, Grabar, and Aksoy, *In Pursuit* (n. 36 above); Baykan, *Turkish and Islamic Art* (n. 37 above); J. Kröger, ed., *Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen* (Berlin, 2004); H. Bilgi, ed., *Asırlar Sonra bir Arada: Sadberk Hanım Müzesi'nin Yurtdışından Türkiye'ye Kazandırdığı Eserler* (Istanbul, 2005); C.-P. Haase, *A Collector's Fortune: Islamic Art from the Collection of Edmund de Unger* (Munich, 2007); and J. M. Rogers, *The Art of Islam: Masterpieces from the Khalili Collection* (London, 2010). Studies that consider Islamic censers to some extent in their context are E. Kühnel, "Islamisches Räuchergerät," *Berliner Museen, Berichte aus den Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 41 (1920): 241–50;

katzia influenced Ottoman forms, so much so that Ottoman censers in the end greatly diverge from the censers typically found elsewhere in the Islamic world. For example, there seems to be only one preserved Ottoman version (fig. 14) of a Mamlūk spherical censer, which, relative to the larger number of katzia-informed censers, indicates that Ottoman craftsmen looked toward Byzantine models. The same argument holds for Ottoman hanging censers (figs. 17 and 18), of which only three examples are extant, to our knowledge, two of them mentioned above and the third in the Topkapı Palace Museum.⁹⁶ This type shares the hexagonal base with the Cyprus Censer (fig. 13) and others of this kind; both also share a superstructure for suspension—the Ottoman ones made of rigid wire, the Byzantine ones made of chains.

The decoration of incense burners likewise shows general continuity, but with some significant variations. Byzantine censers featured every conceivable type of ornamentation—from the typical vegetal and floral, to architectural and figural. By contrast, it is no surprise that Ottoman censers for religious spaces were entirely restricted to nonfigural decoration, except for the rare circumstance of repurposed Chinese ceramics turned into censers. Yet, the decoration of Ottoman censers does not depart dramatically from many of the Byzantine examples. Both Byzantine and Ottoman censers with foliate designs allude to paradise as a land of sweet smell.

Further similarities present themselves in the context of incensation, as both Byzantines and Ottomans employed fumigatories in liturgical and

funerary settings. The same can be said for function and meaning: incense purified, sanctified, honored, and protected the worship space as much as the worshippers and the dead. Both religions relied on more ancient understandings of incensation. Moreover, in both contexts incense created an olfactory environment that was essentially timeless and placeless and that connected all coreligionists across periods and territories. At the same time, however, the use of incense responded directly to the needs of the individual rites. Ottoman practice clearly emphasized ritual purity, while Byzantine practice privileged incense's sacrificial and mimetic dimensions.

More obvious discontinuities can be found in the manner of deployment. While Byzantine priests swung thuribles because they had to fumigate within a short amount of time to punctuate specific moments in the liturgy, Ottomans deployed incense over a more extended time period, perfuming the mosque slowly with a portable censer or by strategically placing a stationary one. It is also likely that Ottoman incense pastilles and sticks did not need the vigorous fanning with oxygen that was required by the resin pieces used by Byzantine priests.

Finally, Byzantines and Ottomans did not perfume their places of worship with the same scent. The Ottomans did not diverge from this millennia-old olfactory tradition but they did mark their holy spaces with composite fragrances distinctly different from Byzantine ones. The need to differentiate mosques from churches not only by visual and auditory, but also by olfactory means would have contributed to the use of scents specific to the Islamic context, such as mixtures containing musk and ambergris. (Very likely it was the complex nature of these composite fumigatories that necessitated the employment of buhuncus, rather than just entrusting the spiritual leader with the task.) This strategy of appropriation, which adopted and emulated but also adapted and challenged cultural forms, is very much in parallel to how early Muslims engaged with Byzantine culture and how Ottomans engaged with the architectural heritage of the Hagia Sophia and other significant monuments.⁹⁷

M. Aga-Oglu, "About a Type of Islamic Incense Burner," *ArtB* 27 (1945): 28–45; E. Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art* (Albany, 1983); idem, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden, 1989); and G. Fehervari, "Islamic Incense Burners and the Influence of Buddhist Art," in *Iconography of Islam: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Robert Hillenbrand*, ed. B. O'Kane (Edinburgh, 2005).

96 The hanging censer in the Topkapı Palace Museum (no. 21/198) is inscribed and dated to 1793/94 and was used to fumigate the chamber of the Holy Mantle (of the Prophet). Its shape is different from the two hanging censers in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in that, here, a goblet-shaped burner was mounted within a lantern-like contraption. The base, square with chamfered corners, contains a drawer for storing incense pastilles. A survey of prominent censers and rose water sprinklers from the Topkapı Palace Museum is in preparation: B. Uzun and N. Ergin, "Scenting the Imperial Residence: Objects from the Topkapı Palace Museum Collections," *Journal of Islamic Material Cultures* 1 (forthcoming 2015).

97 For this argument, see O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, rev. and enl. ed. (New Haven, 1987), and G. Necipoğlu, "Challenging the Past: Sinan and the Competitive Discourse of Early Modern Islamic Architecture," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 169–80.

In summary, there were more continuities than discontinuities; when rituals involving incense had similar valences—and in many instances they did—then both practices and objects remained virtually the same across late Byzantine and Ottoman cultures. As the title of this essay indicates, this was truly a shared culture of fragrance. Indeed, fragrance itself is a useful metaphor for cultural exchange: it can permeate spaces across physical boundaries and take on the shape of these spaces; it can appear to be everywhere and nowhere, concrete and fleeting at the same time; and those who experience the same fragrance may still attach different memories, emotions, and meanings to it.

✂ AN EARLIER VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE WAS presented at the conference “Cultural Exchanges between Byzantium, East and West in the Late Byzantine World (12th to 16th Centuries),” University of Haifa, Israel, in 2012. We thank the organizers for accepting our paper and for the productive discussions and generous hospitality. A portion of the Ottoman material has previously been included in N. Ergin, “The Fragrance of the Divine: Ottoman Incense Burners and Their Context,” *ArtB* 96, no. 1 (2014): 70–97, and we are grateful to Kirk Ambrose, editor-in-chief of *Art Bulletin*, for granting us permission to repurpose this material. Moreover, we are indebted to Cecily Hilsdale for her guidance and support, Margaret Mullett for her encouragement, and the

two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Any remaining mistakes are our own. The beginning of our collaboration dates back to 2011, when Tera Lee Hedrick was a junior fellow at Koç University’s Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations and Nina Ergin a post-doctoral fellow in the research program Art, Space and Mobility in the Early Ages of Globalization, at the Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florenz, and we are grateful to these institutions for their crucial scholarly and financial support. Many thanks are also due to Seracettin Şahin of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, for research and copyright permits, and to Ali Serkander Demirkol and Sevgi Kutluay for their kind assistance during the research.

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